

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O 231450Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7468

NASA HQ WASHDC IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T TANANARIVE 1304

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NASA, MA, US

SUBJECT: NASA STATION CLOSURE: COMMENTS ON GOMR'S NOTE OF JULY 22

REF: A. TANANARIVE 1124; B. TANANARIVE 1293; C. TANANARIVE 1296

SUMMARY: GOMR'S POSITION IN VIEW OF THEIR MILITARY OCCUPATION OF STATION, REFUSAL TO LET NASA PERSONNEL RE-ENTER, AND THEIR RENEWAL OF BACKRENT DEMANDS, IS ESSENTIALLY HOLDING NASA EQUIPMENT HOSTAGE AGAINST DEMAND FOR \$12 MILLION RANSOM. ALTHOUGH WHAT DEPARTMENT AND NASA CONSIDER IS APPROPRIATE RESPONSE IN GTDIKHAOF RECONCILING DESIRABLE AND POSSIBLE NOT KNOWN TO EMBASSY, COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS ON SITUATION BY EMBASSY ARE FORWARDED IN THIS MESSAGE. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT USG RESPONSE TO GOMR NEEDS TO BE BOTH FIRM AND FORTHCOMING IF SOME HOPE OF GETTING EQUIPMENT OUT IS TO BE MAINTAINED. TOO SOFT A RESPONSE WILL BE READ AS WEAKNESS AND TOO HARSH A ONE COULD LEAD RATSIRAKA TO OVERREACT. EMBASSY PRESS RELEASE, FOR EXAMPLE, WAS DRAFTED WITH THIS IN MIND WHEN IT USED PLEASANT LANGUAGE BUT REFERRED TO CONTINUATION OF ASTP WHICH WAS THUMBING OF NOSE AT GOMR ACTION. POIN WAS NOT LOST ON ALERT MALAGASY. WE STILL HAVE TO CONTEND WITH RATSIRAKA'S PERCEPTION OF SITUATION AS DESCRIBED IN REFTTEL A. HE HAS BEEN CONSISTENT IN HIS OVERESTIMATE OF VALUE TO NASA AND US OF STATION IN GENERAL AND IS NOW PROBABLY APPLYING THE SAME OVERESTIMATE TO VALUE OF EQUIPMENT

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IN PARTICULAR.

2. CONSTRAINTS ON RASIRAKA'S ACTIONS EXIST BUT THEY MAY BE OF MINIMAL VALUE IN PRESENT SITUATION. NASA ISSUE WAS CLEARLY BONE OF CONTENTION OVER PAST FEW MONTHS IN GOMR INNER CIRCLE BUT RATSIRAKA HAS HAD HIS WAY. RATSIRAKA HAS SAID HE ACCEPTS THAT HIS ACTIONS WILL LIKELY PRECLUDE FUTURE U.S. AID; HE MAY WELL IGNORE THREATS CONCERNING INTERRUPTION OF PRESENT AID AS WELL (BASED ON HICKENLOOPER AMENDMENT, FOR EXAMPLE, IF APPLICABLE). IN FINAL ANALYSIS RATSIRAKA ALSO MIGHT ACCEPT THREAT TO CONTINUED U.S. - MALAGASY RELATIONS, BUT IN THIS CASE MORE BECAUSE HE PROBABLY DOUBTS U.S. WOULD REALLY ABANDON HIS STRATEGIC ISLE TO SOVIETS AND CHINESE, RATHER THAN HIS DESIRE TO SEE SUCH A RUPTURE. A POLICY OF "TOUT AZIMUTHS" BECOMES LESS DEFENSIBLE IF SOME OF THE AZIMUTHS WITHDRAW. THE BRITISH HAVE ALREADY DECIDED TO LEAVE, ALTHOUGH THE BRITISH CHARGE IS ATTEMPTING TO GET A REVERSAL FROM THE FOREIGN OFFICE FOR WHAT ARE ESSENTIALLY SENTIMENTAL REASONS. THIS EMBASSY DID APPEAL TO SENTIMENT IN ITS JULY 14 PRESS RELEASE, BUT EMBASSY BELIEVES DECISION ON HOW FAR WE GO IN RISKING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS SHOULD, OF COURSE, BE BASED ON JUDGMENT OF CURRENT U.K/M INTERESTS IN MADAGASCAR - NOT SENTIMENT. RATSIRAKA KNOWS THAT MANY MALAGASY WOULD SEE U.S. AND U.K. ABSENCE AS HIS FAULT AND THEY WOULD SEE SOMCETS AND PRC AS HIS CHOSEN REPLACEMENTS, BUT HE MIGHT NOT CARE.

3. WITH PRECEDING IN MIND, EMBASSY PROPOSES FOLLOWING POINTS FOR RESPONSE TO LATEST GOMR NOTE. LANGUAGE CAN BE CHANGED AND POINTS MADE MORE SUBTLY, BUT FIRMNESS WILL ADD TO CREDIBILITY.

A. THERE IS LITTLE NEED TO RESPOND IN DETAIL TO THE GOMR'S RENEWAL OF ITS "BACKRENT" DEMANDS. THE LEGAL POSITION OF THE USG IS ENTIRELY DEFENSIBLE AND THE USG IS CONFIDENT THAT AN INTERNATIONAL COURT WOULD RULE ITS FAVOR AT CONSIDERABLE COST TO THE GOMR. AGAINST THE GOMR ASSERTIONS, THE USG HAS SEVERAL LIKE AGREEMENTS WITH OTHER NATIONS AS WELL AS THE DRAFT AGREEMENT PREPARED BY A PREVIOUS MALAGASY GOVERNMENT IN LATE 1974 THAT SUPPORT ITS POSITION.

B. IN A PRACTICAL SENSE, HOWEVER, BOTH COUNTRIES LOSE BY
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INTERNATIONAL ADJUDICATION SINCE THE PROCESS IS COSLY AND TIME-CONSUMING. THE EQUIPMENT AT THE NASA STATION WOULD BOTH DETERIORATE AND DEPRECIATE. THE EQUIPMENT IS OF LITTLE VALUE TO THE GOMR BASED ON NASA EXPERIENCE WITH EQUIPMEN IT HAS OFFERED TO THE GOMR IN THE PAST. MOST WAS NOT TAKEN. ALSO THE GOMR CANNOT EXPECT THE USG TO ESSENTIALLY BUY BACK ITS OWN EQUIPMENT FOR 12 MILLION DOLLARS. ASIDE FROM BEING ODIOS, IT WOULD BE MORE PRACTICAL TO BUY NEW EQUIPMENT AND

SAVE SHIPPING COSTS ON THE OLD.

C. THE USG CHOSE NOT TO RESPOND TO THE GOMR'S REQUEST FOR

\$100,000 EACH FOR CY'S 1974 AND 1975, AS LONG AS HE GOMR WAS NOT WILLING TO COOPERATE IN REMOVAL OF NASA EQUIPMENT AND STATION CLOSING OPERATIONS. THE USG IS WILLING TO PAY THIS AMOUNT AND HONOR THE AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE REACHED ON THIS SUM IN 1974 - UNDER THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

1) THE OCCUPATION OF THE STATION BY MALAGASY TROOPS BE TERMINATED; A REASONABLE NUMBER OF GENDARMES MAY REMAIN.

2) FULL ACCESS TO THE STATION BE GRANTED ALONG LINES OF EMBASSY'S AIDE MEMOIRE OF JULY 21 AND GOMR GUARANTEE NO INTERFERENCE WITH REMOVAL OF EQUIPMENT INCLUDING CUSTOMS CLEARANCE.

3) FIRST \$100,000 PAYMENT WILL BE MADE SHORTLY AFTER FIRST TWO STEPS T448,

4) SECOND \$900,000 PAYMENT WILL BE MADE DECEMBER 31, 1975 OR SOONER IF CLOSING OPERATIONS FULLY COMPLETED.

D. NASA WILL LEAVE ALL REAL PROPERTY INTACT WHICH COULD SERVE AS A TECHNICAL TRAINING CENTER OR SCHOOL. THERE ARE NINE BUILDINGS COMPLETE WITH ELECTRICITY, PLUMBING, AND AIR CONDITIONING WORTH SOME \$???. ADDITIONAL ITEMS MAY BECOME AVAILABLE AS CLOSING OPERATIONS PROCEED.

E. THIS IS A FINAL OFFER.

4. DEPENDING ON HOW HARD A LINE DEPARTMENT AND NASA WISH
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TO TAKE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL POINTS COULD BE CONSIDERED FOR USG RESPONSE. AGAIN, THEY WOULD HAVE TO BE STATED LESS BALDLY. ALTERNATIVELY, US RESPONSE COULD ALSO MOVE IN STAGES SUCH AS FIRST DEMANDING REMOVAL OF TROOPS IN EXCHANGE FOR WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS \$100,000 FOR EXAMPLE.

A. EXPROPRIATION OF U.S. GOVERNMENT PROPERTY COULD FORCE DISCONTINUANCE OF ALL U.S. AID TO MADAGASCAR. THIS IS NOT A MATTER OF A POLITICAL DECISION BUT OF U.S. LAW.

B. A NEGATIVE RESPONSE TO U.S. OFFER BY GOMR WOULD NECESSITATE THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S REFERRING THE CASE TO AN INTERNATIONAL COURT. THE USG WOULD BE OBLIGED TO STATE ITS CAED PUBLICLY RECOGNIZING THAT IN DOING SO IT WOULD DIMINISH THE GOMR STATURE AND CREDIT WORTHINESS IN INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL

CIRCLES.

C. THESE ARE STATEMENTS OF FACT NOT THREATS OR PROVOCATION.

5. IN ADDITION TO WHAT WE SAY THERE ARE SOME THINGS WE CAN DO TO SIGNAL TO GOMR THAT IT CAN EXPECT NEGATIVE U.S. REACTION TO CONTINUED NON-COOPERATION, OR AT LEAST GIVE THEM PAUSE, AS DID CLOSING OF CULTURAL CENTER.

A. TWO REQUESTS FOR EXTENSION OF DEADLINES HAVE BEEN REQUESTED (REFTELS B AND C) CONCERNING RR LOAN AND ELE-COMMUNICATIONS LOAN. REQUESTS COULD BE DENIED OR IGNORED BUT MAY BE MORE TROUBLE FOR USG THAN GOMR.

B. HAVE CHARGE RETURN TO WASHINGTON FOR CONSULTATIONS. ECONOMIC-COMMERCIAL OFFICER WILL RETURN JULY 26 AND CAN HANDLE EMBASSY. CHARGE'S WIFE, INCIDENTALLY, IS EN ROUTE TO US AT HIS EXPENSE FOR LEAVE. CHARGE'S CHILDREN ARE HERE.

C. IF DEPARTMENT HAS NOT ALREADY DONE SO, IT COULD CONVOKE MALAGASY AMBASSADOR. AS A JURIST HE MIGHT NOT BE SO CERTAIN OF LEGAL BASIS OF GOID CLAIMS AND SO TELL HIS GOVERNMENT.

6. TO THE DEGREE U.S. TAKES ANY NEGATIVE ACTION OR SUGGESTS IT, WE MUST CONTEND WITH POSSIBLE REACTIONS BY RATSIRAKA. BESIDES KEEPING NASA EQUIPMENT, HE COULD WELL MOVE TO
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NATIONALIZE U.S. INVESTMENT IN MADAGASCAR AS BEING CONSISTENT WITH HIS REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM. WE SHOULD CONSIDER THAT AT SOME TIME HE MIGHT DO SO IN ANY CASE. U.S. INVESTMENT HERE IS ESTIMATED TO BE WORTH LESS THAN \$7 MILLION; ESSENTIALLY ESSO AND CALTEX DISTRIBUTION FACILITIES PLUS SINGER SEWING MACHINE COMPANY FACILITIES. ESSO STORAGE DEPOT IN TANANARIVE, INCIDENTALLY, WHICH IS MAIN DEPOT HERE, IS STILL GUARDED BY MALAGASY SECURITY FORCES AT NIGHT AS IT HAS BEEN SINCE FEBRUARY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, EQUIPMENT, REPORTS, CLOSURE OF OFFICIES, TRACKING STATIONS, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975TANANA01304
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750254-0509
From: TANANARIVE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750728/aaaaayxh.tel
Line Count: 210
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 75 TANANARIVE 1124, 75 TANANARIVE 1293, 75 TANANARIVE 1296
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <27 AUG 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <12 DEC 2003 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NASA STATION CLOSURE: COMMENTS ON GOMR'S NOTE OF JULY 22
TAGS: PFOR, MA, US, NASA
To: STATE NASA HQ WASHDC
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006